

**THE VETERANS SUICIDE PREVENTION CHANNEL
5th ANNUAL AVAFEST 2023 FESTIVAL
“TURNING THE TIDE ON VETERAN SUICIDE”
October 14 - November 13, 2023**

The Veterans Suicide Prevention Channel (VSPChannel) is preparing to launch its 5th annual Austin Veteran Arts Festival (AVAFEST) event in the Central Texas communities of Austin, Round Rock and Temple, Texas. The motto of this year’s festival is still **“Using the Arts to Save and Change Veterans’ Lives.”**

Once again, AVAFEST 2023 is being organized under the leadership and guidance of Glenn Towery, who is the founder and chairman of the VSPChannel, the little nonprofit 501c3 organization that he created in 2018. The VSPChannel online and on ROKU television broadcasts 24 hours a day, 7 day a week. Both can be accessed and viewed on all electronic devices by visiting the **VETERANS ARTS AND WELLNESS NETWORK** online at: <https://veteransartsandwellnessnetwork.org/>

**THE KALAHARI RESORT “HEALING CONCERT AND COMEDY SHOW”
for VETERANS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL, November 10, 2023**

The **Really Big Show** that is expected to draw a large crowd is the KALAHARI Round Rock Resort Suicide Prevention HEALING CONCERT and MANDATORY FUNNY COMEDY SHOW. “All of the comedians in the comedy show are veterans,” says AVAFEST Comedy Director, Chris Crawford, who is a very funny man himself. This Suicide Awareness project is slated to happen on November 10, 2023. Kalahari Resort Round Rock has donated its largest Convention Center Ballroom for this event. KALAHARI Resort is one of the wonders of Texas, and it has a large herd of life-sized elephants across from the front entrance and features what could be the tallest giraffe in the world. It is a very family friendly atmosphere with many interesting shops, restaurants and places to explore and have fun that include TOM FOOLERY Game Center and one of the largest indoor Water Parks. Veterans and/or military personnel who decide to spend the weekend or the night will be offered a special Military Discount. The Kalahari ballroom is being provided to the VSPChannel for a period of 24 hours and there may be other events planned for that day leading up to the 6 p.m. kickoff of the special event concert and comedy show. The VSPChannel is planning to simulcast and live stream this event to its channel and social media outlets the day of the event. Presently, the VSPChannel is in the process of booking the 2 to 3 bands that will be a part of this wonderful night at Kalahari Resort. To learn more, check out the grand opening of our revised website for the AVAFEST Schedule of Events at: www.avafest.org. There will be no charge to anyone who attends this Suicide Prevention Awareness event. This is a free event offered by the VSPChannel, and our

sponsors the VFW, MAC HAIK FORD, HEB, Georgetown Rotary, the FIELD OF HONOR and, as always, the Texas Veteran Commission as well as other sponsors who may join us after the publishing of this article.

AVAFEST 2023

This year's AVAFEST 2023 will feature four Veterans Art Exhibits, two in Austin, Texas: **"Celebrating Women Veterans"** at the Old Bakery and Emporium curated by **Department of Parks and Recreation Museums Manager, Herlinda Zamora** and the **"50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War"** Exhibit produced and curated by acclaimed artist and Vietnam Combat veteran **Franklin Mendez**. The Round Rock exhibit is being produced by **Round Rock Arts President, Charlie Favret and curated by Diane Bilke**. It will be held at the Jester Annex Complex located on Old Settlers Blvd, in Round Rock, Texas. There is an Art Exhibit that will open in Temple, Texas on Veterans Day, November 11, 2023 at the **CAHILL Center** sponsored by **"HELP HEAL VETERANS"**, the national organization whose local office is headed up by **Trish Alger** and her dedicated staff. Trish Alger is the director of the Temple, Texas organization responsible for creating and distributing FREE Art Kits to veterans throughout America and Texas.

TOURNAMENTS are a great way to keep veterans active and healthy. AVAFEST 2023 is featuring four tournaments for veterans, military personnel and their family members to participate in. **Pickle Ball** is being added for the first time in AVAFEST history, and the **Chess Tournament** sponsored by CHESS VETS will be presented in the Temple, Texas Library by **Michael and Illia Lennox**. The Chess tournament promises to be lively and well attended event. These tournaments also include a **Golf** tournament sponsored by **Troy Dunson of the Guardian Community Golf**, and the ever popular **Disc Golf** sponsored by its **Director, Thomas Stricklin "Strick" of the SAVE OUR SOLDIERS (SOS)** and who is also the founder of **Bogey Free Golf**. There will also be a large fair, art exhibit and concert with a comedy show on Veterans Day, November 11, 2023 at the CAHILL center in Temple, Texas. **MARCUS HOBBS** of King Hobby Shop will be presenting **Model Making** opportunities at various events and venues throughout AVAFEST 2023. The VSPChannel's new website designer, **Sebakunze Matemane**, is also setting up a series of **Paint Parties** for veterans that will be hosted at a soon to be announced venue in Austin, Texas. They are being created to show veterans how to use painting to relax.

AVAFEST at the "TEXAS BOOK FESTIVAL"

This year, the AVAFEST BOOK FAIR Director **ASHLEY KNIGHT**, who is also a veteran and founder of the **Words Unite** bookstore in Killeen, Texas will showcase 10 veteran authors, and **RACHEL PERKINS**, a mental health professional, will be hosting their AVAFEST 2023 projects in coordination with the **TEXAS BOOK FESTIVAL**. The VSPChannel would like to offer its sincerest thanks to the TEXAS BOOK FESTIVAL's

staff and, in particular, Texas Book Festival **President, Dalia Azim** for making it possible to highlight authors who are veterans and spread the word regarding veteran Suicide Prevention through health and wellness that will be presented by Rachel Perkins at their book festival. The Texas Book Festival is also providing the VSPChannel a FREE booth during their highly coveted event.

AVAFEST 2023 ON “CLUBHOUSE”

Once again, AVAFEST 2023 will be on the very popular audio app “CLUBHOUSE for five 1-hour online discussions on the subject of **LONELINESS**, a condition that has led to depression, anxiety and sometimes suicide. The discussion sessions will be held every Sunday starting at 6 p.m., CST on Clubhouse under the direction of Rachel Perkins, AVAFEST Director of Health and Wellness. Our Keynote Speaker and expert on this subject will be **Dr. Ryeal Simms, a PhD in Psychology and a United States Marine Corps veteran**. The dates for the CLUBHOUSE discussions are Sundays October 15, 22, and 29 and Sundays November 5 and 12, 2023. If you have expertise in the area of coping with Loneliness and would like to be a part of the expert panel for this discussion, contact Rachel Perkins at: rachlemorganperkins@gmail.com

THE VETERANS SUICIDE PREVENTION CHOIR

We are currently forming a 100-member all veterans Suicide Prevention Choir. The person in charge of the formation of the choir is Rev. Dr. Ernest A. Benson who also serves as a Chaplain at the Temple, Texas VA Hospital. For information as to how you can join this choir contact the Choir Director, Kermit Reaves at: kermitreaves@yahoo.com

SPECIAL AVAFEST CHANNEL PREMIERES DURING AVAFEST 2023

The VSPChannel will be streaming several SPECIAL broadcasts for veterans this AVAFEST 2023. We will be airing a special Sci-Fi television series written and produced by **Air Force veteran Tony Santa Ana**. We hope that you will tune in to see “**The AWAKENED NIGHT SERIES**.” There are six action-packed episodes that promise to keep you on the edge of your seat. Also, there is the debut and premiere of his film “**OFFCOURSE**” a story about “*When the People You Kill Come Back to Haunt You*”

We are also premiering shows that veterans and military personnel wherever they may be in the world can participate in online and on our ROKU television channel. The **VETERAN MONOLOGUE SHOWCASE** accepts two-person scenes and monologues for broadcast on our channel as a bundled show. You may submit your video for consideration to be a part of the showcase. THIS IS A FAMILY FRIENDLY SHOW so keep that in mind when producing monologue or scene. Your project should be at least 3 minutes long and no longer than 10 minutes. We accept video files that are .mp4 or .mov only. Submit your files to: avafestgtowery@gmail.com

THE VETERAN CAN DANCE SHOW

Send a video of you dancing that is no longer than 10 minutes to the link below.

avafestgtowery@gmail.com Video files must be in .mov or .mp4 only.

A single dancer or a group of dancers are welcome as long as there are veterans in the dance.

To learn more about AVAFEST 2023, our schedule of events and more activities visit our newly revised website at: www.avafest.org or email us at: avafestgtowery@gmail.com We hope to see you at AVAFEST 2023 soon.